



PRESS RELEASE

Page 1 of 2

Administrative Office of Courts

Callie T. Dietz, Administrative Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 31, 2011

For Further Information, contact:
Dean Hartzog, PIO (334) 954-5041 or
Robert Rygiel, Asst. PIO (334) 954-5147

Alabama Juvenile Courts Among National Leaders In Efficiency

MONTGOMERY, AL - Efficiency in the courts is an essential aspect of a refined and quality judiciary, and Alabama maintains that efficiency, particularly in dealing with juvenile caseloads. "One of the most important jurisdictions in our Alabama court system is that of juvenile and family law. Dealing with cases that effect children, youth, and families must always be a top priority at all levels of the justice system," stated Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb, who was a juvenile court judge for more than 12 years before coming to the appellate bench. "We congratulate our juvenile court judges and personnel on this excellent accomplishment."

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC), working in conjunction with the Court Statistics Project (CSP), publishes a statistical analysis of states' judiciaries each year. The most recent publication, "Examining the Work of State Courts: *An Analysis of 2008 State Court Caseloads*," illustrates that Alabama's clearance rate in juvenile caseloads is among the top in the nation. In 2008, Alabama had 14,069 incoming dependency cases. Alabama was fourth of 22 states studied in dependency clearance rate, falling behind only Maryland, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, all of which had significantly fewer incoming cases. The median in the study was 100%, and Alabama's clearance rate was 112%.

Alabama ranked first of 17 states examined in terms of status offense clearance rate. A status offense is defined as a minor's violation of the juvenile code by performing some act that would not be considered illegal if an adult committed the same act including consuming alcohol, smoking tobacco, and truancy. Alabama had 8,286 such status offense incoming cases and accomplished a clearance rate of 113%. The median was 100%, and only three other states had a higher number of incoming cases than Alabama.

"We are certainly proud of the outstanding work of our juvenile court officials and staff in obtaining these high rankings. Due to the emphasis of child advocates across the State, such as Chief Justice Cobb and our juvenile court judges, it is not surprising that Alabama ranks this well," Callie T. Dietz, Administrative Director of Courts, explained. She added that "good case management has been a high priority for our courts in recent years."

Alabama has led the way in many juvenile reform efforts, for example, rewriting the state Juvenile Code, which was passed into law in 2008, and collaborating with other state agencies, such as the Department of Youth Services and the Department of Human Resources. These efforts have resulted in the development of many local programs and resources for juveniles and families that did not exist several years ago.

(END OF PRESS RELEASE)